



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee

February 22, 2010 Public Hearing

Comments Submitted By Christine S. Horrigan, Government Director

Support For:

HB 5021 AA Implementing the Governor's Recommendations

Concerning the Citizens' Election Program

HB 5022 AAC The Citizens' Election Program

My name is Christine Horrigan. I am Government Director for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with over 2000 members dedicated to improving our systems of government and impacting public policies through citizen education and advocacy. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for giving the League the opportunity to comment upon the bills that are before the Committee today.

Connecticut voters overwhelmingly support public financing of campaigns according to a recent poll commissioned by Common Cause. League leaders are here today to show their support. League members across the state are also voicing their support for the Citizens' Election Program as you'll see in our supplemental submission entitled *League Members Speak Up for the Citizens' Election Program*.

The League applauds the Governor and GAE Committee's commitment to "fixing" the Citizens' Election Program so that it passes constitutional muster. We support both bills that are before the Committee today. More specifically, the League supports:

- Immediate repeal of Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-717, the so-called "reversion clause" which hangs like the proverbial sword of Damocles over the Program and which could trigger the demise of the Program in seven days in the event of an adverse decision from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. ***The League believes that repeal of this clause, contained in both bills, is crucial.***
- Reducing the grant amounts available to candidates, provided the reductions are reasonable and the grants remain adequate to allow participating candidates to run competitive races.

- Addressing the treatment of minor party candidates under the Program, either by making the enabling legislation party neutral as proposed in the Governor's bill or reducing the percentages for prorating grants as proposed in the GAE Committee's bill.
- Finding a solution to the problem of "triggers" for matching funds under the excess and independent expenditure provisions of Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 9-713 and 9-714. This is perhaps the thorniest problem facing the legislature. Candidates are right to be concerned about the ability of millionaire candidates to outspend participating candidates and the ability of outside organizations to run attack ads, particularly in light of the United States Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*. The Governor's bill eliminates supplemental grants for excess and independent expenditures during the pendency of any appeal of the district court's judgment in *Green Party of Connecticut v. Garfield*. The League does not believe that this is a practical solution. We support revamping these provisions as proposed by the GAE Committee.

The League is heartened that the legislature is finally beginning to move on this issue and that a "fix" for the Citizens' Election Program is being treated with the priority it deserves. We look forward to working with you to ensure the successful passage of a "fix" for this critical program.

Thank you.